

April 15, 2012  
Stewardship Profile  
Stanley Socha/Divine Mercy Sunday

Stanley Socha and Charles Karns carpooled to Habitat for Humanity Orange County sites from 1995 to 2002. They were part of the crew of “skilled old timers.” Stanley is a carpenter and worked with the foreman on the weekday crew aligning walls, hanging doors and putting in cabinets.

At that time Stanley joked, “I haven’t been fired yet.” Firing was out of the question in 1950 when the Marian Fathers in Stockbridge, MA hired Stanley for a two-week job and kept him busy for 10 years. They needed to build a chapel. Stanley said, “They didn’t have much money and only a few men. Not many people knew how to carve.”

The name “Divine Mercy Chapel” was the only definite thing they had. The design was in the head of Antonio Guerrieri, a master furniture builder. There were no blueprints or architectural plans. The idea of a modest stucco building changed as the Fathers received donations of bricks and marble and granite. Donations of money allowed the stakes to be moved to enlarge the footprint. Stanley’s future wife, Jadwiga (Jay), was the Marian Fathers’ secretary. “I handled lots of one dollar bills.” Stanley repaired her office furniture. He noted, “I did everything around there.” He built the framework for the tower for a donated bell. He recalled, “It weighed a ton and was raised up on a rope.” Jay remembered the day the bell was rung for the first time, “All work stopped.”

Stanley’s major contribution was his self-taught carving skill. Stanley’s daughter Susanne Jackson, with whom he and Jay live, emphasized that everything in the Shrine was carved by hand: pews, pulpit, choir balcony, confessionals and paneling. The ceiling arches were carved on the ground and then raised upward. When Stanley visited the chapel, now the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy ([www.marian.org/shrine](http://www.marian.org/shrine)), some 50 years later he was impressed, “It was perfect – nothing loose.”

The Shrine is the site for the largest celebration in the Northeast of the Feast of the Divine Mercy. On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II proclaimed the Divine Mercy as a feast day to be held every year on the Sunday after Easter. On that same occasion, he canonized Sister Mary Faustina Kowalska. In her *Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul*, she recorded her visions and conversations with Jesus. In his homily, Pope John Paul II said, “The implicit message of Divine Mercy is about the value of every human being.”

In our diocese, the feast will be celebrated on April 15 at 2:00 at Holy Cross Catholic Church, 2438 S. Alston Ave. in Durham. St. Thomas More Knights of Columbus Divine Mercy Assembly will participate.

Stanley Socha and Charles Karns still carpool. Charles picks up Stanley, now 87, every Thursday for lunch and a weekly game of pool at the Seymour Center.

